IN THE CLAIMS:

Kindly rewrite Claims 1-22, and add claims 23 and 24 as follows:

1-11. (Canceled).

12. (Currently amended) A method for producing L- threonine comprising:

A) cultivating in a culture medium an L-threonine-producing ~~bacterium belonging to the genus~~ *Escherichia coli* strain, wherein the bacterium has been modified to ~~enhance~~ increase the ~~activity~~ expression of an aspartate aminotransferase gene by a method selected from the group consisting of increasing the copy number of said gene, and modifying an expression control sequence of said gene, wherein said gene encodes a protein comprising the amino acid sequence shown in SEQ ID NO: 2, and

B) collecting the L-threonine from the culture medium.

13-14. (Canceled).

15. (Currently amended) The method according to claim ~~14~~12, wherein said ~~activity~~ expression of the aspartate aminotransferase gene is increased by increasing the copy number of the aspartate aminotransferase gene.

16. (Previously presented) The method of claim 15, wherein the copy number is increased by transforming said bacterium with a low copy number vector containing said gene.

17-18. (Canceled).

19. (Currently amended) The method of claim ~~13~~12, wherein said aspartate aminotransferase gene comprises ~~DNA selected from the group consisting of:~~

~~(a)~~ a DNA comprising ~~a nucleotide sequence of~~ the nucleotides 1 to 1191 in SEQ ID NO: 1~~; and~~

~~(b) a DNA which is hybridizable with a nucleotide sequence of the nucleotides 1-1191 in SEQ ID NO:1 or a probe which can be prepared from said nucleotide sequence under stringent conditions, and codes for a protein having an activity of aspartate aminotransferase~~.

20. (Canceled).

21. (Currently amended) The method of claim ~~13~~12, wherein said bacterium has been further modified to ~~enhance~~ increase expression of a gene selected from the group consisting of

a) ~~the~~ a mutant *thrA* gene of *Escherichia coli* which codes for aspartokinase homoserine dehydrogenase I resistant to feed back inhibition by threonine,

b) ~~the~~ a *thrB* gene of *Escherichia coli*, which codes for homoserine kinase,

c) ~~the~~ a *thrC* gene of *Escherichia coli*, which codes for threonine synthase,

d) ~~the~~ a *rhtA* gene of *Escherichia coli*, which codes for putative transmembrane protein, and

e) ~~and~~ combinations thereof,

wherein the expression of the gene is increased by a method selected from the group consisting of increasing the copy number of the gene, and modifying an expression control sequence of said gene.

22. (Currently amended) The method of claim ~~21~~12, wherein said bacterium has been modified to increase expression of ~~said~~ a mutant *thrA* gene of *Escherichia coli* which codes for aspartokinase homoserine dehydrogenase I resistant to feed back inhibition by threonine, ~~said~~ a *thrB* gene of *Escherichia coli*, which codes for homoserine kinase, ~~said~~ a *thrC* gene of *Escherichia coli*, which codes for threonine synthase, and ~~said~~ a *rhtA* gene of *Escherichia coli*, which codes for putative transmembrane protein,

wherein the expression of the genes is increased by a method selected from the group consisting of increasing the copy number of the gene, and modifying an expression control sequence of said gene.

23. (New) The method according to claim 12, wherein modification of an expression control sequence of the gene is placing the gene under the control of a promoter selected from the group consisting of a lac promoter, trp promoter, trc promoter, PR promoter, and PL promoter.

24. (New) The method according to claim 21, wherein modification of an expression control sequence of the gene is placing the gene under the control of a promoter selectecd from the group consisting of a lac promoter, trp promoter, trc promoter, PR promoter, and PL promoter.